



The Redpoll

Newsletter of the Arctic Audubon Society, Fairbanks, Alaska

Vol. 27 Issue No. 4

February 2005

Mission of Arctic Audubon:
Earth has unparalleled natural diversity, productivity, and beauty, and provides for life. Recognizing the full value of nature, we work to protect Alaskan ecosystems by encouraging research, education, and management that will contribute to appreciation and good stewardship of this natural heritage. We also strive to conduct our own lives in harmony with nature.

The Arctic Audubon Society publishes *The Redpoll* for its members monthly fall through spring. National Audubon Society (NAS) dues are \$35; new members are \$20. NAS membership includes local chapter dues. Chapter only membership is \$10 and includes the newsletter.

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Paddling Remote Amazonian Rivers in Handmade Canoes

slide presentation by Larry Landry

Monday, February 14, 7:00 p.m.

Noel Wien Library Auditorium

There are still some wild, remote and untouched places in the Amazon rainforest. Local environmentalist Larry Landry has made five trips, one-to-three months in length, exploring some of these areas. Several times, Larry made and then traveled the rivers in handmade canoes. Come see slides and hear tales from these splendid places.



Rio Quebrada in Pacaya-Samiria National Park, Peru

Audubon-Riedel Nature Center Events

Ski/Snowshoe Field Trip to Property

Come tour the Audubon-Riedel Nature Center property near 5 Mile Chena Hot Springs Road on Saturday, February 19. Meet at Creamer's Field Farmhouse parking lot at 10:00 a.m. to carpool. Bring a lunch/snack, binoculars, and snowshoes/cross-country skis if you have them. Dress warmly! The hike/ski will last 2-3 hours. We'll look for birds and animal tracks. Directions will be provided. Contact Tom Green for more information at 452-6370 (home), 474-1559 (work), or email at fftkg@uaf.edu. For a historical perspective on the Audubon-Riedel Nature Center, see the article in the January 2003 issue of *The Redpoll* available online at www.arcticaudubon.org.

Audubon-Riedel Nature Center—The Next 20 Years

Potluck Dinner & Discussion

Wednesday, February 23, 6:00 p.m.

Twenty years ago, Elonore Riedel donated her 160-acre homestead on Chena Hot Springs Road to the Arctic Audubon Society. Join us on February 23rd as we take a short look back at the history of this beautiful property and a longer look forward as we brainstorm about how this land can be enjoyed and used for education and recreation.

continued on page 2

Nature Center Potluck Discussion

continued from page one

We have photos, maps, articles, and a few slides to help us review the energetic work in the mid-1980s to develop a nature center and education programs. For those who were involved, it is a walk down memory lane.

More important, we will have an informal discussion and brainstorming session to discuss the future and how we can realize Elanore's vision of "a space where I hope others may find the magic I've found in these woods. Where children may come to love and respect the natural land, an open space for people and animals to enjoy as more of this area becomes devoted to houses."

We hope you will join us on February 23, 6:00 p.m. at the Ken Kunkel Community Center, located on the south side of Goldstream Road, just west of Ivory Jack's and the Goldstream Store between Propwash Drive and O'Brien Street. A map and directions are available online at www.goldstreamvalley.net.

For more information, contact Gail Mayo at 479-2954 or lgmayo@mosquitonet.com.



Cruise to Cordova Festival

Stan Stephens Cruises in Valdez will offer transportation to the Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival this spring. Ticket are \$110 per person, roundtrip or one-way for travel on the following days:

Depart Valdez on Friday May 6, 8:30 am

Depart Cordova on Sunday May 8, 1:00 pm

The boat trip is approximately five hours each direction. Of course, stops will be made if something of interest is spotted along the way. There is space for 100 persons, but an additional boat will be added if needed, increasing the capacity to 130.

For additional information or to make reservations, contact:

Amanda Bauer

Stan Stephens Cruises, Inc.

amanda@stephenscruises.com

866-867-1297

Arctic Audubon Society Small Grant Program

by David Shaw

The Arctic Audubon Society is a small non-profit conservation organization based in Fairbanks, Alaska. As a regional entity of the National Audubon Society's chapter system, Arctic Audubon's region encompasses members north of the Alaska Range, including the North Slope and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The mission of the Arctic Audubon Society is to work to protect Alaskan ecosystems by encouraging research, education, and management that will contribute to appreciation and good stewardship of our natural heritage.

In keeping with this mission statement, we have developed a granting program to foster work pertinent to our mission. In early 2005, Arctic Audubon will consider grants applications of up to \$2,000. Funded projects will act to enhance the understanding and conservation of Alaska's organisms and/or ecosystems. Projects dedicated to increasing public awareness, and knowledge of conservation issues will also be considered.

Applicants should submit a cover letter and curriculum vitae detailing competency to successfully complete the project. Applicants are also required to include a single page description of the project, budget, and a timeline for completion. Successful recipients will be expected to submit a report of outcomes and be willing to give a short presentation on the project (if requested).

Applications are due March 1, 2005. For information regarding Arctic Audubon please visit www.arcticaudubon.org. Please submit all materials to: Arctic Audubon Society, Small Grants Program, PO Box 82098, Fairbanks AK 99708. Or send electronically to ftdws@uaf.edu.

A Shorebird Expedition to Kamchatka, Russia

USFWS biologist Steve Kendall presents a free public seminar on Tuesday, February 22nd at 7:00 p.m. at the ABO Center for Education & Research. Experience the images and stories from Kendall's August 2004 expedition on the spectacular Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia.

2004 Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count Results

by Gail Mayo

The 2004 Christmas Bird Count was blessed with gentle weather, although a little sunshine would have greatly improved the flat lighting. As most birders expected, Redpoll numbers were high although inconsistent from area to area.

Surprise! The final tally revealed a total bird count well above any previous numbers, even though the group effort was about average. The 80 teams of observers in the field and/or at feeders saw almost 2,000 more birds than during our previous high count in year 2000. This was entirely due to Redpolls that dominated our totals, two Redpolls to one of all other species combined. The hotbed of Redpoll activity was Chena Ridge where 25% of all recorded Redpolls were seen. Mallards also stood out with a historic high count. Black-billed Magpies were more numerous than ever before with a count of 12 in South Fairbanks, bringing their total to 17.

Conversely, three species were sighted just once. Amy Turner and Brook Gamble saw a Goshawk, Mark Ross saw a Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Ron and Mary Teel saw a Junco.

Seventy-five people participated in this year's count. There were 45 parties out in the field and 34 feeder counters reporting. Half of the feeder counters also did field counts. Four parties saw a total of ten species—congratulations to Frank Keim and Don Ross, Laurel Devaney and Ken Russell, Ray Hadley and Philip Martin, and Jim and Nancy DeWitt. A large number of teams were close behind, spotting eight or nine species. The average number of birds seen per hour of effort was high, thanks to those Redpolls. Thanks for the extra efforts of the area coordinators go to Joyce Potter, Mark Ross, Amy Turner, Ken and Laurel, Jamie Marschner, Pam Bruce, Frank Keim, and Tom Green. And thanks to our young birders who helped out so ably—Joseph Green, Jake Billings, Luke DeCicco, and Quinn Evenson.

What was the neatest bird seen during the count week? Good question! Perhaps the neatest birds were seen once count week was over. Mark Ross saw Snow Buntings on the west ridge of the University of Alaska campus, the Mayos had a pair of Pine Siskins hanging around their feeder for a couple of days, and someone reported a Snowy Owl near Ann's Greenhouse.

We hope you will comb the data table available on our website (use the "Christmas Bird Count" link) for your own ideas about Christmas Bird Count 2004 results. If you couldn't get out and count this year we hope you'll plan to join us next year.

To the right is a list of species seen on Fairbanks Christmas Bird Counts since 1964. If anyone spots omissions, please let me know:

Species seen on Fairbanks Christmas Bird Counts 1964–2004

1. American Robin
2. American Tree Sparrow
3. American Wigeon
4. Black-backed Woodpecker
5. Black-billed Magpie
6. Black-capped Chickadee
7. Bohemian Waxwing
8. Boreal Chickadee
9. Boreal Owl
10. Brown Creeper
11. Bufflehead
12. Common Goldeneye
13. Common Raven
14. Common Redpoll
15. Dark-eyed Junco
16. Downy Woodpecker
17. European Starling
18. Fox Sparrow
19. Gadwall
20. Golden-crowned Sparrow
21. Gray Jay
22. Great Gray Owl
23. Great Horned Owl
24. Green-winged Teal
25. Gyrfalcon
26. Hairy Woodpecker
27. Hoary Redpoll
28. Lesser Scaup
29. Mallard
30. Northern Goshawk
31. Northern Hawk Owl
32. Northern Pintail
33. Northern Shrike
34. Pine Grosbeak
35. Pine Siskin
36. Red-breasted Nuthatch
37. Rock Pigeon
38. Rock Ptarmigan
39. Rosy Finch
40. Ruffed Grouse
41. Rustic Bunting
42. Rusty Blackbird
43. Savannah Sparrow
44. Sharptailed Grouse
45. Siberian Tit
46. Snow Bunting
47. Snowy Owl
48. Spruce Grouse
49. Three-toed Woodpecker
50. Townsend's Solitaire
51. White-crowned Sparrow
52. White-winged Crossbill
53. Willow Ptarmigan

Alaska Audubon Hires Director of Bird Conservation

Audubon's Alaska State Office has hired Dr. Iain Stenhouse as Director of Bird Conservation to lead a statewide Important Bird Area (IBA) project. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and private donors have committed a multi-year grant to help fund the position. Executive Director Stan Senner said, "We are excited about the chance to identify IBAs throughout Alaska and about the person we've hired to do the job."

Dr. Iain Stenhouse, a native of Scotland, completed his B.Sc. in Biology at the University of Paisley, Scotland, in 1992. His honours research and thesis focused on foraging habitat selection in breeding winter wrens. In 1998, he completed an M.Sc. in Biopsychology at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), Canada, focused on the habitat use and breeding success of Leach's Storm-Petrels.

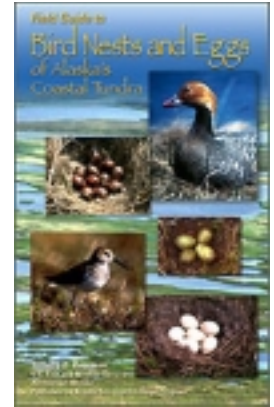
In 1998, Iain's research attention shifted north. In conjunction with the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), he spent four summers on Southampton Island in the eastern Canadian Arctic, where he carried out his Ph.D. research on the reproductive and behavioral ecology of Sabine's Gulls. In 2003, CWS and MUN worked together to create a postdoctoral fellowship for Iain, focused on the status and conservation of Ivory Gulls. This project involved carrying out aerial surveys for Ivory Gulls breeding in the Canadian High Arctic, and writing a recovery strategy for this species.

In addition to the IBA project, Iain will be responsible for updating the Alaska *WatchList*, which highlights declining and vulnerable bird populations in Alaska. Essentially, the *WatchList* is an early warning system that focuses attention on at-risk populations before they are in jeopardy of extinction.

Much of this work will involve collaboration and cooperation with a range of partnering organizations and communities, and Iain looks forward to working closely with scientists, conservationists, and other stakeholders to help Audubon achieve further lasting contributions to bird conservation in Alaska.

New Bird Nest Guide Published

Alaska Sea Grant and the AUS Fish and Wildlife Service have published the "Field Guide to Bird Nests and Eggs of Alaska's Coastal Tundra." Illustrated with more than 450 photographs of birds, nests and nesting habitat, eggs, feathers, and wings of over 70 species, this easy-to-use book provides an efficient way to identify nests and eggs of birds on Alaska's coastal tundra. Its range includes the Alaska Peninsula, the Bering and Chukchi sea coasts, and east along the Arctic Coastal Plain past the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the Canadian border.



The book is constructed with tough, waterproof paper that will hold up under rigorous use in the field. Written by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ornithologist with 15 years of experience in Alaska, this book is a valuable resource for biologists and naturalists, and a unique addition to any birder's personal library. More information is available at http://www.uaf.edu/seagrant/Pubs_Videos/pubs/SG-ED-44.html

Author: Tim Bowman

Year: 2004

No. pages: 80

Price: \$25.00 US

ISBN:1-56612-085-3

Northern Voices:

Authors on the Environment

This monthly series features prominent authors known for their works on the environment and the human relationship with it. Sponsored by the Northern Alaska Environmental Center and the Fairbanks Library Association, each program is held at 7:00 pm at the Noel Wien Library Auditorium. Please join us for the following:

February 10 Carolyn Kremers

March 3 Nancy Lord

April 14 Marjorie Cole

May 12 Dan O'Neill

Keep Track of Local Birds on the Birding Hotline

by Laurel Devaney

With snow drifts obscuring your feeders and hoarfrosted windows making it almost impossible to see outside, how does a birder keep track of the avian population at this time of year? Even if you're a couch potato, you can keep up with the latest bird sightings. The answer is only a phone call or computer keystroke away!

Arctic Audubon Society operates a Birding Hotline that covers interior Alaska. By calling 451-9213, you can record a sighting or discover what other birders have found. You can also access the hotline online at the Real Birds website: <http://www.virtualbirder.com/vbirder/realbirds/rbas/AK.html>.

The hotline isn't just reserved for sightings of rare birds. It's also a good place to record first arrivals of spring migrants, track the birds as they leave the area in the fall, and record seasonal behavior, like calling owls in late winter. In this way, the hotline becomes an informal record of the birds in our area, much like the Christmas Bird Count. The Birding Hotline is also a good place to learn about upcoming events hosted by the Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) and Arctic Audubon.

Here are a few of the bird highlights from the past few months:

- Two rarities were spotted in the Fairbanks area the week of September 20. A **Western Palm Warbler** was caught at the ABO banding station on Saturday, September 18. A juvenile **Cedar Waxwing** was with a large flock of American Robins feeding in a chokecherry tree in the hills above Ester on Thursday, September 16.
- Two **Mountain Bluebirds** were seen at the peat pits at Great Northwest along College Road on September 27.
- There have been a number of reports recently of very late and probably doomed migrants. An **American Golden Plover** was seen near rapidly-disappearing open water at the South Cushman ponds on October 26 and 28. A **Yellow Warbler** was coming into a feeder on Chena Ridge on October 30. Another unidentified warbler was trying to eat sunflower seeds at a feeder along Farmer's Loop on October 31.
- A juvenile **Sharp-shinned Hawk** has been frequenting a bird feeder off of Steele Creek road. It

was seen on November 27 and 29.

- Birds seen along the open water in the Chena River from the power plant to Pioneer Park on November 28 include a **Glaucous Gull**, a male **Greater Scaup**, and a juvenile **Common Goldeneye**.
- **Great Horned Owls** are becoming more active as their breeding season approaches. A pair was seen perched on the Geophysical Institute building on the UAF campus on November 25. Another bird was calling off of Goldstream Road on November 23.
- A small falcon that was likely an **American Kestrel** was seen on Toboggan Lane off Goldstream Road on November 24.

The Fairbanks Christmas Bird Count occurred on Sunday, January 2. Teams scoured our area, finding a few noteworthy birds. A **Northern Goshawk** was seen in the Ester count area. Twelve **Black-billed Magpies** were counted at the landfill, and another was seen in the Farmer's Loop count area. **American Robins** were seen on Rosella Road on Ft. Wainwright and in the University count area. **Dark-eyed Juncos** were seen at feeders on Gilmore Road, Senate Drive, and Manchester Loop. Two **Boreal Owls** were counter-calling off of Goldstream Road early on January 2. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were counted in the Chena Ridge and University areas. A **Northern Hawk Owl** was seen along Dale Road on December 31.

If you plan to record a bird sighting, please remember to include the date and place where the bird was seen along with your name and phone number. We'll look forward to hearing from you!

Wild About Waterfowl

Saturday, February 12th from 12-2:00 p.m.
at the ABO Center for Education & Research

Kids of all ages are invited to join educators from the Alaska Bird Observatory and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for "Wild About Waterfowl." Get official contest rules and registration information for the Alaska Junior Duck Stamp competition. Learn artistic techniques and tips on what the judges are looking for. There will be games, door prizes and lots of fun! Cost for the program is \$2/child for members and \$3/child for non-members.

Arctic Audubon Society
PO Box 82098
Fairbanks, AK 99708
www.arcticaudubon.org

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Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

Arctic Audubon Board Meeting, Feb. 7, 5:30 p.m.

Members are welcome at the monthly Board meeting held in Room 201, Irving Bldg. UAF campus.

Paddling Remote Amazonian Rivers in Handmade Canoes, Monday, February 14, 7:00 p.m.

Slide presentation by Larry Landry at the Noel Wien Library Auditorium.

Field Trip to Audubon-Riedel Nature Center Property, Saturday, February 18, 10:00 a.m.

Meet at Creamer's Field Farmhouse parking lot; see page one article for details.

Audubon-Riedel Nature Center—The Next 20 Years, Potluck & Discussion, Feb. 23, 6:00 p.m.

Strategize about the future of this beautiful property; see page 1 & 2 for details.

Arctic Audubon Board of Directors

email address: arcticaudubon@netscape.net

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Vice President: Amy Turner
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Birding Hotline: (907) 451-9213



Updated by Laurel Devaney & Ken Russell

Report interesting bird sightings;
learn what others have spotted.

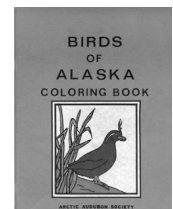
also at

www.virtualbirder.com/vbirder/realbirds/index.html

Birds of Alaska Coloring Book

for sales information call

Gail Mayo, 479-2954 or
Amy Turner, 474-4227



Audubon Society Membership Form

- Introductory rate, \$20 Two Year membership, \$30
 Student or Senior rate \$15

Membership includes both National Audubon and the local chapter, Arctic Audubon. You will receive National Audubon's magazine, *Audubon*, and Arctic Audubon's newsletter, *The Redpoll*.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City

State

Zip

- I do not want the Audubon Society to share my name with other organizations.

Amount enclosed: \$_____ (Make check payable to National Audubon Society)

Send to: Arctic Audubon Society
PO Box 82098
Fairbanks, AK 99708

A52
7XCH

- Chapter Only Membership, \$10.

For membership in Arctic Audubon Society *only*, check box and make check payable to Arctic Audubon.